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ORGI SALT

Letters

Why the Senate Should Ratify SALT II

To the Editor:

As members of the Federation of American Scientists (most of whom are listed as Sponsors) we wish to express disagreement with F.A.S. Director Jeremy J. Stone's March 11 Op-Ed article, "SALT, in Perspective."

First, we do not believe that the goal of SALT, as purported by Stone, is the SALT process itself. We believe that the objective of any SALT agreement must be the enhancement of security through progress in limiting strategic weapons. We are less concerned that the failure to ratify the SALT II treaty might have damaging effects on the SALT process than we are concerned that a failure to ratify will be an irreparable setback to the goal of getting the dangerous strategic arms race under control.

Stone apparently believes that recommitting the treaty with the pious exhortation to "try harder" from hawks and doves alike will somehow make a satisfactory agreement more easily attainable than has been possible in seven years of negotiations. We believe this view is fundamentally flawed. Soviet leaders, and for that matter those in most other countries as well, will inevitably reach the conclusion that the U.S. Government is in-

capable of agreeing on even modest limitations to its nuclear arsenals. The Soviet military will almost certainly insist on continuing and probably accelerating all current buildups. In the U.S. the hawks will not be alone in insisting on a menu of new weapons programs to match the Soviet Union's.

If Stone is really interested in arms control and in the SALT process, which he seems to be trying to support, they will certainly be furthered more by ratification of the treaty than by failure to ratify and having to send the negotiators back to Geneva. While the treaty does not end the arms race and solve all our security problems, it is by no means as short on substance as Stone would have us believe.

For the first time it places limits on all types of strategic delivery vehicles, bombers as well as ballistic and cruise missiles.

For the first time it reverses the arms race and calls for reduction from existing force levels. The Soviets will have to scrap more than 250 relatively modern weapons.

For the first time it puts an overall limit on the total numbers of warheads each side can have. While it does not solve the ICBM vulnerability problem, it does put finite limits on the size of

the threat to land-based ICBM's.

For the first time it puts restraints on the qualitative arms race by limiting each side to testing and deploying only one new ICBM and putting restrictions on mobile land-based missiles.

Finally, it establishes many new procedures to assist verification and remove uncertainties as to the strategic threat facing each nation.

If the Senate fails to ratify the SALT II treaty:

- Do Stone and others downgrading SALT really think that the Soviet Union will reduce, not add to, its arsenal of strategic delivery vehicles?

- Do they really think that the Soviets will restrict their testing and deployment of new ICBM's to one new model between now and 1985?

- Do they really think that the Soviets will deploy no more than 820 of their SS-17, SS-18 and SS-19 ICBM's whether they are MIRVed or not? — or stop production and deployment of their potentially mobile SS-16 ICBM?

- Do they really think the U.S. is less likely to deploy the MX ICBM?

- Do they really think that the completion of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty will be hastened?

Stone's article seems based on the proposition that the SALT II treaty will fail to be ratified. By poor-mouthing its accomplishments and naively implying that the renewal of negotiations will readily bring a different treaty satisfactory to doves and hawks alike, he is probably increasing the likelihood that it will not be ratified.

We believe the treaty should be ratified because it enhances our security by making important steps toward controlling strategic weapons. A failure to get it ratified would be a major setback to a sane nuclear weapons policy.

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McLean, Va., March 26, 1979

The letter was also signed by Ruth Adams of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, Hans Bethe of Cornell, Abram Chayes, Paul Doty and George Kistakowsky of Harvard, Sidney Drell of Stanford, Richard Garwin of I.B.M., Gerard Piel of Scientific American, Charles H. Townes of the University of California at Berkeley and Jerome B. Wiesner of M.I.T.